

The Rolling Stones Rock for Charity

BY ROBERT HILBURN
Times Rock Music Critic

It was more than a little ironic that the same day the Rolling Stones were holding the biggest rock 'n' roll charity concert in history at the Inglewood Forum, the English rock band received what appears to be the final word that it won't be allowed to perform in Japan because Mick Jagger is apparently considered undesirable.

"We've known for several weeks now that there were problems over getting into Japan," a discouraged Peter Rudge, who coordinates the Stones' tours, said after the concert for the Nicaragua earthquake victims that drew 18,825 persons to the Forum Thursday night.

"But there always seemed to be some area of hope, some new angle to attack, some other person to reason with. That hope seems gone now. I talked to the Japanese promoter this morning and he said there doesn't appear to be any chance left. Only a miracle could get the Stones into Japan now."

Special Effects

Since all the Stones except Jagger have been granted visas, it appears the problem revolves around Jagger's 1969 misdemeanor arrest in England for possession of marijuana.

"When we signed the contracts back in October, we were assured there would be no visa problems," Rudge continued. "We built the whole Pacific tour around Japan. The Stones had never played in Japan and they were really looking forward to it. They even had some special stage effects built for the tour. And there was an audience waiting for them. All 60,000 seats in Japan were sold in five hours. We were going to add two more shows."

"But something happened. There is something about the Stones that apparently frightens the government there. The whole thing got blown out of proportion. It wasn't just a rock 'n' roll tour any more. When newspapers are running editorials over whether Mick Jagger should be let in the country, it's really insane."

An obviously unhappy Jagger said: "If we can't play Japan, two months of



MOVING RIGHT ALONG—Mick Jagger, above, center of attention at the Rolling Stones' benefit concert for earthquake victims of Nicaragua, is joined in a duet by Keith Richards, below right. The event was at Inglewood Forum.

Times photos by Tony Barnard



my life have been wasted. I've done nothing for two months but prepare for this show . . . one of the reasons they gave me was that I'm too famous . . ."

Except for the news from Japan, there was a sense of combined relief and celebration backstage after the concert that it had come off at all. Whereas one would normally need three to four weeks to put together a concert of such magnitude, this one was compressed into a frantic week. Some of the staging, which was being shipped to Honolulu (where the Pacific tour starts Sunday), didn't arrive at the

Forum until 6 p.m. Thursday.

Because all the concert pieces fit together so smoothly, producer Bill Graham obviously was generous in his praise after the show, singling out Chip Monck (staging and lighting), Tyco Brahe (sound) and, particularly, the Forum's Jim Appell.

But Graham did express disappointment over what he felt was a lack of record industry support for the concert.

"I expected the \$100 tickets to be bought by the record industry and the Beverly Hills heavies with the 16 and 17-year-old daughters. They were tax deductible and all that. But it didn't happen. Some record companies did support the concert, but some did absolutely nothing." He didn't name specific companies.

Lack of Support

Graham said the lack of support forced him to re-scale several hundred of the \$100 tickets to \$25 at the last moment, thus cutting into the original \$516,810 gross estimate. Gary Stromberg, the Stones' publicist, said official figures hadn't been tabulated and that the only estimate he had for concert gross was between \$400,000 and \$500,000. A nonprofit corporation has been set up to hold the money until the Stones decide to which of the various agencies involved in earthquake relief they should forward the funds.

For the audience at the forum that wasn't concerned with logistics and didn't know about the Japanese tour problems, it was simply an evening of good fun Thursday — a chance to take part in a special moment in rock history. Even if the show nets only \$400,000, it will far outstrip the August, 1971 Bangladesh concert (\$243,000) as the biggest

grossing rock concert.

Though Santana and Cheech & Chong received warm receptions and were called back for encores (Cheech & Chong's effectiveness in such a large setting was particularly impressive), it was clearly the Stones that the audience had come to see.

Since the Stones do tour regularly, the Forum show lacked the exclusivity of Bangladesh where Bob Dylan and George Harrison made such rare appearances, but it did demonstrate quite convincingly that the Stones continue to be the world's most exciting rock 'n' roll band. It wasn't the best Stones' show I've seen, but it was—particularly when you consider the group had only two days' rehearsal — a solid, dynamic show.

After a 45-minute delay compounded by problems in the piano sound hook-up, the Stones, led by Jagger who wore a variety of glittery effects (from a silver tiara to silver sash around his waist), were on stage from 11:10 p.m. to 12:50 a.m., offering 19 songs. While most of the material was from the last United States tour (six songs from "Exile on Main Street"), there also were some oldies ("Route 66,"

"Stray Cat Blues," "It's All Over Now") and some more recent songs that weren't on the last tour ("Dead Flowers," "Live With Me").

As usual, Jagger, with his bumps and grinds and prancing, was the center of attention. The highlight of the show visually was a special elevated boardwalk at the rear of the stage. Twice, Jagger leaped up on the brightly lit platform and went through his usual series of energetic body contortions. Jagger's wife, Bianca, a native of Nicaragua, watched the show from behind the piano at the left side of the stage.

"I'd really like to thank you all tonight for shelling out so much bread. We really appreciate it," Jagger told the audience early

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ROCK FAN--Mick Jagger's wife Bianca, a native of Nicaragua, watched the show from behind piano.

Times photo

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in the show, his only reference to the benefit nature of the evening.

When the Stones go through some of their songs that date back to 1964, you realize how very long, particularly in the short life span of rock, the Stones have been around and how very much they've changed: from the scruffy, underfed-looking English kids who were excited by all the new things happening to them, to the confident, aggressive, rebellious, even sinister figures of the late 1960s, to their more recent, less self-conscious role as simply a great rock 'n' roll band. Altamont is only a memory now.

There wasn't a hint of perversion or subversion in the Stones' show Thursday night. Just some of the most exciting rock 'n' roll in the world. It's a

shame the audiences in Japan probably won't be able to see it.